

## HEALTHY BODY/HEALTHY MIND

# Hair loss could be sign of alopecia

Aprella  
Bridges,  
R.N.



Hair loss or alopecia involves partial or total hair loss that usually affects the scalp but may also affect other body areas.

Alopecia may progress slowly and irreversibly with changes in hair structures, or it may progress rapidly and temporarily from a disruption in the normal hair growth cycle.

A healthy person loses about 100 hairs a day simply from brushing, combing, shampooing and shedding. The hair grows back at the same rate. Problems

arise when hair loss occurs at a faster rate than new hair growth.

There are two types of hair loss, scarring and non-scarring. Scarring alopecia involves inflammation and destruction of the follicular (root) structure, which may cause irreversible (no cure) hair loss. Non-scarring alopecia rarely involves inflammation and destruction of the follicular structure. This means that the hair follicle can usually reproduce hair. Tests for alopecia are simple and painless. The doctor starts by observing the patient's hair and scalp. He or she will do a "pluck" or "pull" test, firmly and smoothly tugging a group of 8 to 10 hairs. If more than 4 hairs come out, the patient probably has alopecia.

Other tests include laboratory procedures, biopsies and possibly blood test to rule out diseases such as syphilis.

Treatment depends on the amount of hair loss and the type of alopecia. Unfortunately, for some, no treatment can restore hair loss.

For others, medication or surgery (hair transplantation) may help. Hair loss from chemotherapy can be minimized with the use of scalp cooling and scalp tourniquets.

Other alternatives include hairpieces, hair weaving or bonding. A healthful diet, and proper hair care is always an advantage.

Hair care tips:

- Do not use harsh hair chemi-

cals, such as permanent wave solutions or relaxers. These can damage hair, causing splitting and shedding.

- Avoid burning hair devices such as curling irons and hair dryers at high settings.

- Try smooth rather than toothed rollers and avoid hot curlers.

- Change hairstyles if hair loss comes from traction caused by tight braids or ponytails.

- Camouflage hair loss by restyling hair to cover thinning spots.

For those of us that are into natural/herbal medicine, there is a multiple vitamin available especially for hair, skin and nails available at Kamit Natural Foods.

# Osteoporosis preventable for women

Vicki L.  
Seltzer,  
MD



## WOMAN'S HEALTH

Osteoporosis, the condition in which bones become so brittle that they break easily, was once thought to be inevitable in many older women. Now we know that women can take steps to protect against bone loss that leads to osteoporosis, and those who already have the condition can help strengthen bones to reduce further damage. The diet and exercise that help older women preserve their bones can also help middle-aged or younger women lessen their chances of getting osteoporosis in later years. In fact, protection begins in adolescence when a girl is building her bone mass. Health-conscious parents can give their daughters the knowledge and

habits that will help them build and maintain strong bones throughout their lives. Diet. Calcium is critical. From their teens to their mid-20s, women need about 1,200 milligrams (mg) of calcium each day, and pregnant and breast-feeding women need the same amount. Other women who have not yet reached menopause need about 1,000 mg of calcium a day. For postmenopausal women not on estrogen replacement therapy, the recommended daily intake of calcium jumps to 1,500 mg. Dairy products (regular, lowfat or nonfat), leafy green vegetables, nuts and seafood are important sources of

dietary calcium. Women who cannot digest milk, or who, for other reasons, do not include adequate calcium in their diets can take supplements. Exercise. Because it strengthens bones, regular weight-bearing exercise such as aerobic dancing, or even walking several blocks, is important for women of all ages. Many doc-

tors recommend forty-five minutes a day of such weight-bearing exercise, three days a week. Older women, or women who have never exercised, should start out slowly and build up to the recommended guidelines. When constructing an exercise regimen, women of all ages should consult their doctor.

Hormone Replacement Therapy. Women are most vulnerable to rapid bone loss after menopause, when their bodies' natural supply of estrogen drops dramatically. Estrogen protects against bone loss, improves calcium absorption, and enhances the effect of exercise on the bones. Many doctors now prescribe estrogen replacement therapy for postmenopausal women and for some women who experience severe menopausal symptoms. Women in these categories should consult their doctors to determine if estrogen replacement is suitable for them. If women remember these steps to protect against bone loss -- diet, exercise and (for many

postmenopausal women) hormone replacement therapy -- osteoporosis could become a rare condition.

# Mega doses of 'E' harmful

By Paul Recer  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Most vitamin E supplements have only one form of the nutrient and taking large doses of pills may block the natural benefit of another form of the vitamin, researchers say.

In a study published today, food scientists at the University of California, Berkeley, said they have found that alpha-tocopherol, the form of vitamin E found in pills, does an incomplete job of neutralizing some damaging chemicals and that high doses of the supplement blocks the action of another form of the vitamin, gamma-tocopherol.

Stephen Christen, a biochemist and lead author of a study today in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, said people would be better off taking only modest doses of the pill and then eating foods rich in gamma-tocopherol.

Earlier studies have shown that vitamin E protects against heart disease and cancer and slows aging by absorbing oxygen free radicals, destructive chemicals that form during metabolism and when the body fights disease.

But to get full benefit from the vitamin, people also need gamma-tocopherol, found in soybeans, nuts and grains, said Christen.

The researcher said he hopes vitamin pill companies soon will add gamma-tocopherol to their vitamin E formulas.

Christen said that of the E vitamins, only gamma-tocopherol gets rid of peroxynitrite, a highly destructive nitric oxide radical found at sites of inflammation. Where there is chronic inflammation, he said, peroxynitrite can start processes leading to cancer and heart disease.

In laboratory tests, Christen said, California researchers

found that gamma-tocopherol also was the only form of vitamin E that could permanently trap and remove nitrogen oxide, a chemical common in polluted air.

Additionally, the studies showed that high levels of alpha-tocopherol reduce the levels of gamma-tocopherol in the blood. Thus, said Christen, high doses of current vitamin E pills actually can block a beneficial natural nutrient.

"The initial evidence is pretty clear," he said. "We should not be taking only alpha-tocopherol in supplements."

Since few pills now contain both the alpha and gamma forms of vitamin E, Christen said people should limit the amount of the supplement they take. Amounts above 100 international units may be harmful, he said.

John Hathcock, of the Council for Responsible Nutrition, a trade association for vitamin pill makers, disagreed. He said high doses of vitamin E have been found to lower the "bad" type of cholesterol in the blood.

Hathcock said Christen's study was "an important expansion" in understanding gamma-tocopherol, "but what is lacking is any proof that this makes any clinical difference."

He said a healthy diet of fruits and vegetables has nutrients that will neutralize destructive chemicals missed by vitamin E in supplements.

Christen said he recommends that vitamin pill companies make a vitamin E supplement that is half-and-half, alpha and gamma tocopherol.

"Both are readily extracted from plants such as soybeans," Christen said.

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